

be restored to the bill by the adoption of his amendment.

Mr. DONALDSON said the whole of the programme of the gentleman from Frederick was entirely consistent with his opinion in favor of biennial sessions. But, as he illustrated in a few explanatory remarks, it was directly in conflict with the amendment he (Mr. D.) had offered.

Mr. CHAMBERS said:

The bill as framed by the committee contemplated annual sessions. A vote of the House apparently decisive, had expressed a preference for biennial sessions. The amendments so far adopted, would require the first election for the first biennial session to be held in the fall of 1852, unless, indeed, it should be designed to have the election sixteen months before the session commenced, instead of four, which he could not presume to be the design. The amendment now offered by the gentleman from Frederick, (Mr. Thomas,) was calculated to foreclose that question. He thought it ought to await the action of a full house. He regarded it as an important question, and thought the elections ought to be thrown upon the even years, so that every alternate election should occur at the same time as the election for electors of President.

It was certainly desirable in every general election to furnish every facility and every inducement to voters to express their opinions. He thought it quite undeniable that a more full expression of popular sentiment could be expected, when in addition to the interest excited by the election for State officers, there would be added the further interest of a Presidential election. To this motive was added another—that of economy. Why incur the unnecessary expense of two elections, when you gain all the advantages, and indeed additional advantages, by having one? Not only would the number of voters be diminished, and the permanent expenses of the counties be unnecessarily increased, but we are now asked to provide for a third annual session of the Legislature to enable us to bring about these mischiefs. He held it to be altogether unnecessary to hold three successive sessions to carry out the details of the provisions to be adopted in the new Constitution. It ought all to be done in a single session—certainly in two.

Mr. THOMAS briefly replied that as the House had already determined as to the time of elections, that question was settled. It had also incorporated the amendment offered by the gentleman from Queen Anne's, to the 5th section, and that without the present amendment, rendered the bill a deformity. He stated that he had agreed to the amendment making it imperative on the Legislature to hold a second session, because he believed that the Legislature would have done so without such provision. His sole object was to make one section in accordance with another, and his amendment would be in strict conformity with the provisions agreed on by the House.

Mr. MERRICK said he certainly preferred that the sessions of the Legislature should be held in even years. If the amendment of the gentleman

from Frederick was not adopted, the consequence would be, that the Delegates would be elected eighteen months before the session.

Mr. CHAMBERS. The gentleman from Frederick, (Mr. Thomas,) was mistaken in the fact that the House had passed upon the question of the time of the election. His friend from Anne Arundel, (Mr. Donaldson,) had offered an amendment to the third section, which was intended to settle that question, but being one of importance it was passed over informally in consequence of the absence of a large number of members. It was no great evidence of temerity, therefore, to presume, as he had ventured to do, that the House would provide for an election four months prior to the session, rather than sixteen months before the members elect would take their seats. As the matter stood, without the amendment now for the first time offered, that was the only question. In regard to this amendment, he must again ask, "*cui bono?*" The gentleman had heard his objections, very briefly to be sure, but very distinctly stated; first, that every one who encouraged the exercise of this great prerogative of a freeman—the right of suffrage—should multiply the facilities and inducements to a full expression of popular sentiment; and, secondly, that every motive of economy was disregarded by the proposed measure. He could not but invite the attention of the House to the fact that the gentleman had not even made a beginning to answer these objections.

Mr. THOMAS suggested that if the gentleman from Kent was willing to do so, they might go back to the third section and test the sense of the House by a vote, which would settle the difficulty.

Mr. CHAMBERS. The reason which induced the House to pass informally by the third section is of greater force now. If so important a measure should be determined by so thin a House as we now have, it would of course be reconsidered when absent members resume their seats. He wished the subject still to remain open.

The question was then stated to be the amendment of Mr. THOMAS.

Mr. THOMAS asked the yeas and nays.

Which were ordered; and

Being taken, resulted as follows:

*Affirmative*—Messrs. Buchanan, Bell, Welch, Ridgely, Lloyd, Dickinson, Sherwood of Talbot, Chambers of Cecil, McCullough, McLane, Spencer, George, Wright, Thomas, Shriver, Gaither, Biser, Annan, Stephenson, McHenry, Magraw, Nelson, Carter, Stewart of Caroline, Gwinn, Brent of Baltimore city, Ware, Harbine, Brewer, Anderson, Weber, Hollyday, Fitzpatrick, Ege, Shower and Brown—36.

*Negative*—Messrs. Chapman, President, Riccaud, Chambers of Kent, Mitchell, Donaldson, Dorsey, Wells, Dalrymple, Merrick, John Dennis, Williams, Hicks, Hodson, Sprigg, Bowling, Dirickson, Jacobs, Stewart of Baltimore city, Schley, Fiery, Neill, Davis, Waters, Smith, Parke and Cockey—27.

So the amendment was agreed to.